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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Auburn Seminary Increases its Endowment

Not long ago President Stewart stated that Auburn Seminary needed a reserve fund of \$500,000 if it were to continue to meet the ever-increasing demands in the efficient training of ministers. More recently another announcement has been made to the effect that \$230,000 has been received in gifts to the institution. With the gifts already received it is expected that Auburn Seminary will be able greatly to strengthen its work; nevertheless President Stewart anticipates that the remaining quarter of a million dollars will be provided.

The Interdenominational Conference at Wilkes-Barre

An interdenominational conference and exhibit in the interest of Christian education was held recently at Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, under the auspices of the Council of Church Boards of Education. Eighteen Protestant denominations were represented at this the first of a series of such conferences planned for different sections of the country. The purpose of this conference was to impress the fundamental importance of Christian education upon the country. Some of the subjects dealt with were as follows: "The Kind of Education Demanded by Modern Life," "The Recruiting of an Adequate Christian Leadership of Our Age," "The Religious Element in Education a Necessity," "Life-Work

Problems," "The Educational Responsibilities of the Home and of the Church." These subjects were discussed by such men as President John A. MacCracken, of Lafayette College; Dr. Edwin A. McAlpin, Jr., Dr. Joseph W. Cochran; President H. Mengan, of Dickinson College; Secretary H. F. Cope, of the Religious Education Association; Bishop Thomas Nicholson. The Council of Church Boards held another meeting at Niagara Falls on Tuesday and Wednesday, August 22-23, at which definite plans were suggested for future conferences.

New Course of Textbooks

It is announced in the *Living Church* of August 19 that the General Board of Religious Education of the Episcopal Church has provided a new course of textbooks. In the preparation of these books there has been an effort to meet the needs of subject-graded Sunday schools on the lines of the standard curriculum. The course is said to incorporate the most modern principles of scientific teaching based on the new child-psychology and pedagogy. The editors look upon the first issue as an experiment and are hopeful that they may make revisions such as will contribute appreciably to the growing needs of religious education in the Sunday schools. The publications are known as the Christian Nurture Series and sell at 40 cents per copy for a six months' course.

CHURCH EFFICIENCY

Catholic Mayor Resists Church Interference

Doubtless many Protestants will have their attention attracted to New York's Catholic mayor and his recent resistance to church interference with his civil duties. A short time ago Mayor Mitchel insisted on investigating Catholic charitable insti-

tutions that receive city grants, in order to find out if they give honest value for the money. According to the mayor the discovery was soon made that a group of priests of political turn had conspired to wreck his administration. And now Mayor Mitchel has launched a most uncompromising attack on politician priests and on their

meddling with public affairs. The *Continent* says that this assault is "far fiercer than any Protestant official would dare venture on, because a Protestant would fear to be charged with religious bigotry." It seems significant that this attitude of the mayor reflects the feeling of a great body of Catholic laymen throughout the city, and the *Catholic News* finds it necessary to complain of the "indifference" of Catholics to this "disgraceful incident."

Religion and Social Work

At the National Conference of Charities and Correction in Indianapolis, which was held last spring, there were many indications of the close relation of religion and social work. A hasty glance at the personnel of this conference will suffice to persuade the least observant person that the work of social service is contributing very materially in leveling religious and social barriers. For instance, Rev. Francis H. Gavisk, a Catholic clergyman, was the presiding officer, and among the delegates there were two hundred members of the National Conference of Jewish Charities. Dr. Tippy emphasized "religion getting into life" as the striking fact of the present hour in America. "Religion," he said, "is ceasing to make the doctrinal and institutional first of all. It is getting into the arteries of humanity. As a powerful ethical spirit it is pushing out into industry, into control of cities, into international relations, forcing up into these spheres the morality which has been so long established, at least ideally, in the home and in the more private and personal relations of people." The conference at Indianapolis lasted eight days and broke all previous records for size of gatherings of men and women engaged professionally in social work. Arrangements have been made to hold the next session at Pittsburgh, during the spring of 1917. Frederic Almy is the new president, and has announced as the subject of his presidential address "The End of Poverty."

Methodism and the Social Gospel

One of the most shining pages in the minutes of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church as held in May at Saratoga Springs is the page recording its deliverance on modern social problems. The right of the gospel to include a message to humanity on the brotherhood of man and the sympathy, justice, and kindness flowing therefrom has not been quite so authoritatively vindicated before. The Methodist church is surely evangelistic, and it is demonstrating how the social gospel and evangelistic message may be combined. The *Continent*, a Presbyterian paper, regrets the numbness that apparently has overcome the Presbyterian General Assembly, in respect to the social gospel. It says:

The Methodists have heard and cherished their social prophet, Harry F. Ward. The Presbyterians let their prophet, Charles Stelzle, disappear from their church life without protest. The result is apparent—the same that always follows from neglecting a prophet.

Rural Church Efficiency

A simple but not fully appreciated truism is: a church is not an end in itself. Neither is a church an institution for the conservation of ancient religious customs and doctrines. An efficient church is an organization so practicing Christianity, whether according to ancient customs and ideas or more recently evolved thought and method, as to lead to the spiritual and social betterment of its own community.

The efficient rural church must subordinate all outside traditional relationships to the peculiar vital interests of the community in which it exists. Effectiveness in service will be the mark of its acceptability to God and man. The faith for which it contends must be such as has practical bearing on all the vital interests of its neighborhood.

The unit for consideration, either in the city or rural district, is society. In its concern for the individual the efficient

church will realize that its greatest service to any single person can best be rendered by so molding or influencing the general social status as to make an environment natural to soul development. With normally related conditions in the environment the average human being will reach moral maturity. The possibilities are inherent. The major concern of the church should be with the arrangement of conditions.

One fundamental law of God is that development comes through proper social contact. Mankind does not thrive in solitary life nor in small isolated groups. In normal life we give and take, the weakness in one is supplemented by the strength in another. The satisfying social unit is that group in which the complementary element is sufficient. Today, the very marked difficulty in the rural community is in the lack of those free contacts of soul with complementary soul which gives life its true balance.

One great mission of the rural church is so to co-ordinate the different elements of its district as to overcome this pronounced defect. The measure of its efficiency will be in its success in so bringing together the scattered parts of a normal social unit as to make possible the close contact of those characters which need each other for comfortable and fairly complete daily living and who in combination form a strong front for righteousness and general helpfulness.

For this reason we should have in any single country neighborhood the rural church and not rural churches. While it is possible for the single church to spell efficiency, on account of the very nature of the mission as stated, it is almost inevitable that two or more churches in the same district will meet defeat. In country districts multiplication of centers has meant, and will continue to mean, subtraction of influence.

Merely good intentions will not make up for the lack of good judgment in rural church organization. Something must be done to overcome those church methods which have

isolated the different factors in rural neighborhoods. What we need is not more missionary money for the weak churches, but possibly less missionary money, and much more practical sympathy with efforts looking to adjustment by regrouping or single grouping of the people.

One church in a given district sensibly led by a devoted pastor trained in the affairs peculiar to the rural life and mind will be effective. But two or more churches in the same district, even though led by equally strong men, will work to such disadvantage as to waste the time and possibly break the hearts of the leaders or forever drive them from the country. I know a pastor of a large city church who in his college days had decided to devote his life to rural work and was enthusiastic in his decision. When he reached his first field he found the opportunity so limited by divisions that he fled to the city and has been there ever since. What is more, strong men are going to continue to avoid the country unless sectarian prejudice and outside interference occasioned by sectarian pride give way to vital concern for the people's need.

A great day is beginning to dawn for the country church. One herald of this day is the hunger of the people for an adjustment which will make practical and soul-satisfying religious work a possibility. The community idea coupled with the broader concept of divine interests is seeking expression. In the not far distant future the rural fields are to stage some of our greatest religious triumphs. Already isolated instances of efficiency are demanding attention. Very soon victories will come which will make the state take notice and recognize the practical value of Christian effort even as France was led to consider Oberlin in his humble parish in the Valley of the Vosges. But remember that where one Dr. Oberlin might practically lead a people to a triumph demanding general recognition, two or more Dr. Oberlins in the same district would fail.—J. HARGREAVES.